Awakening to Hera: A Study in Astrologically Guided Active Imagination

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Figure 1. Revolving Relations

A particular archetypal dynamic that has both fascinated and perplexed me is the relationship between Juno and Jupiter (Roman mythology), or Hera and Zeus (Greek mythology). Why couldn't a supposedly "just" ruler like Zeus morally stop having affairs and spare everyone Hera's jealous trouble? This question takes on personal

significance, not only because I have experienced the effects of adultery in my family with my father leaving my mother for another woman, but also in my natal astrology chart as I have the asteroid Juno in the 12th house and Jupiter retrograde in the first house of self or personality (Figure 2) . The 12th house rules the unconscious in astrology, and as astrologer Hamaker-Zondag states, “Because the 12th house planets have to do with the unbreakable and unconscious link between the world about us and our inner being, we can effectively help ourselves by communicating via this link in a way that by-passes the conscious ” (Hamaker-Zondag, 1992 pp. 30). Though the Juno asteroid is not a planet, she is the only presence in the 12th house and thus represents an archetypal link to communicating to the unconscious in a practice such as active imagination.

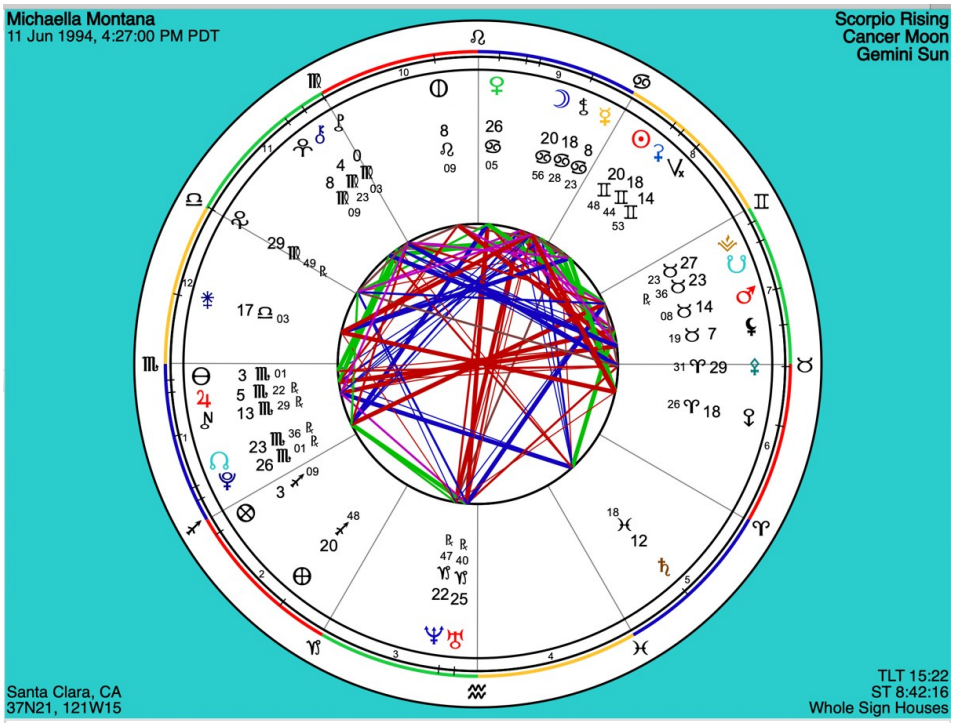

Figure 2. Birth chart of Michaella Montana Source: Time Passages App.

With the astrological chart as a guide, I consider that exploring the archetype of Juno/Hera through an exercise in active imagination could be a way of making conscious the ‘unconscious astrology which is in our bones’ (Jung and Chodorow, 1997, pp. 152). Hence, with active imagination, Juno(Hera) in the 12th house of the unconscious, who is “in my bones” was contacted and envisioned archetypally and astrologically in the resultant art piece. The archetype of Sedna, an Inuit sea goddess, also emerged from the active imagination, and was incorporated into the work organically. As a result of this astrologically informed active imagination the themes of betrayal, jealousy and forgiveness arose. In this paper I will examine these themes from the perspectives of Jung, Hillman and Corbin’s imaginal theory, and hopefully contribute a study in astrologically informed active imagination.

The first theme I will be exploring is that of betrayal, a theme which itself can result in the unconscious becoming conscious. Hillman states that in betrayal “the broken promise or broken trust is at the same time a breakthrough onto another level of consciousness.” (Hillman and Slater, 2005, pp. 190) In betrayal one is painfully woken up to the fact that another has the potential to cause harm by breaking bond that has kept one in unconscious complacence up until this point. In the active imagination I stepped into the feeling of broken trust that Hera, queen of the Olympic gods and goddess of marriage and childbirth experiences when her sacred marriage partner, Zeus goes off philandering with mortals (Cartwright,

2012). Following the steps of imaginal theory, the unconscious was given form in the artwork as the Hera glyph whose many spokes superposed with the “X” reflect the stopped sword/phallus of her philandering husband, Zeus who was the betrayer of the marriage.

Next, the betrayed Hera was given form as the opposites of personal astrological Hera in Libra and the current transit of Jupiter in Aries were brought together in the transcendent function union of opposites, seen through the four ram like symbols surrounding the Juno/Hera glyph which spontaneously arose during the active imagination. This leads to a Hera emerging into consciousness from betrayal, the blooming of purifying flames surrounding her as the transcendent function “ creates a living, third thing- not a logical stillbirth…but a movement out of the suspension between opposites, a living birth that leads to a new level of being, a new situation” (Jung, 2014 pp. 90). Mythologically, the god of war, Ares did emerge from the union of Hera and Zeus as he was their son (Kerenyi, 1951 pp. 150), representing the fiery third resulting from a tumultuous marriage and this is reflected spontaneously in the current transit of Jupiter in Aries and the work.

While making this piece I was admittedly feeling very heated and I wondered, where is the anger coming from? Part of it could be traced to personal history as my father was not loyal to the marriage with my mother, and at the time I had an unconscious identification with my mother. Another position is that I was genuinely feeling Hera’s anger archetypally. This

phenomenon is noted in Hillman's imaginal theory as "Hillman, following Corbin believed images- unlike concepts- must be intimately experienced, relationally engaged, and felt rather than interpreted, explained or simply thought about" (Dietrich, 2018 pp. 153). In doing this active imagination in the artwork I felt the image and figure of Hera coming through phenomenologically. I was conjuring the glyph symbolically but in the imagistic interpretation, I was sticking with the image as it was unfolding. This reflects Hillman's imaginal theory as he asserts that symbols "become images when they are particularized in a specific context, mood and scene (Hillman, 1977 pp. 62). The heat of the Hera symbol became image as she was working through me, drawing by the fire and remembering the pain of adultery in my own life.

The next part of the piece that evokes the theme of betrayal is the hands with cut off figures surrounding the Juno glyph amplifying the Sedna myth of a girl who was trapped living with a bird who had pretended to be a man as her husband on an island. When her father discovered the situation he tried to rescue her in a kayak, but there was a storm and in attempt to save himself he tried to throw her overboard. She clung on to the side of the boat, but he cut her fingers off. She eventually floated to the bottom of the ocean where sea creatures were born out of her hands and she as a spirit became able to control the creatures of the sea. When humans have not treated the ocean fairly Sedna withholds the harvest, thus the hunters in Inuit culture pray to her, (Lindemen, 1999).

In the drawing the hands with cut off fingers attached to the Hera glyph I sensed they became a symbolic amplification of the ocean being betrayed by patriarchy. The ocean has been taken advantage of due to the fact that “much of our industrialized society contains insidious systems that are unsustainable and produce measurable harm” (Davenport, 2017, pp.21). Hera’s peacock feathers in the ocean also reflects this theme of betrayal. The Hera glyph itself looks like a peacock, and according to the myth she is the one who gave the peacock the “eyes” on its feathers. The glyph with the Sedna hands suggests the peacock of the ocean is seeing through the hands of the betrayed goddesses.

Drawing the archetypes of Hera and Sedna together there was also an unintentional overlap in the bird imagery as Sedna’s husband was pretending not to be a bird while Hera’s husband pretended to be a bird (cuckoo) to gain her favor (Kerenyi, 1951 pp. 97). In the context of doing this art by the ocean both these figures “flew” together, as “on the one hand “the imaginal realm immaterialises the Sensible Forms, on the other it ‘imaginalizes’ the intellectual forms to which it gives shape and dimension (Corbin, 1989 pp. IX) The Sensible forms of the birds immaterialized from a literal manifestation in either myth as they flowed into each other in the bird imagery but were imaginalized from an intellectual construct into their manifestation as the final work goes beyond either myth into the phenomenon of the abandoned Goddess. In this way unintentionally drawing the attacking birds felt like a discovery from the imaginal realm

linking the two myths. Watkins notes how “ to invent originally meant “to find out,” “to discover.” (Watkins, 1986, pp. 94). By engaging in the imaginal realm in active imagination and capturing the creation of the third, one is in fact discovering the essences of flighty escapist betrayal in both myths.

Further, through communing with Hera and Sedna I felt their combined image leading back to the multiform soul as “ to be in soul is to experience the fantasy in all realities and the basic reality of fantasy” (Hillman, 1977, 1975, pp. 23). There is a reality in the fantasy of a betrayed queen and a betrayed sea goddess and by experiencing them and their wrath at the injustices one can be led to an awareness of the multiple fantasies present in the reality of soul, and all who have ever been betrayed. Further, by taking these two myths together one realizes the multiple combinations of the symbolism in both myths, which also speaks to the soul-making capacity of the polytheism found in active imagination.

The next theme to unpack from the work is that of jealousy as a green envy emanation moving through the Hera glyph. As I was becoming conscious of Hera’s rage I also stepped into the feeling of jealousy to explore where it was stemming from in the myth. How could Hera be jealous of mere mortals when she is already an immortal queen? Perhaps it was an embarrassment to her ego that she was married to the same man that mortals were encountering intimately. The relationship ego was thus being challenged. This relating to the unconscious then became a sort of

mythically informed active imagination in active imagination, “which brings the ego (center of consciousness) and the autonomous archetypes (universal personified forms governing the psyche) into dialogical relationship.” (Dietrich, 2018, pp. 124-125) Hera is there in my unconscious to test my jealous ego for the process of active imagination itself, whether I have gotten over myself enough to be open in Zeusian fashion to all other archetypes in the collective unconscious in the exercise. Further, though I currently do not have a partner, in my past experience I have spent a lot of time trying to be perfect to someone who was not be able to appreciate it and ended up liking others more. I am now working to accept that Zeus is a creative principle and is continually searching for more opportunities for multiplicity. Perhaps Hera is there in my unconscious to teach me the necessity of overcoming the ego in relating to other figures both in reality and the imagination, accepting the multiplicity in recognizing the other without compromising my sense of self or resorting to an egoic denial of multifaceted reality.

The next phenomenon I would like to explore that emerged during this active imagination was a synchronous event where after having drawn the peacock feathers I walked over to a café that had the television on to the “Peacock” sports station. Through the lens of Jungian imaginal theory this correspondence could be due to the idea that “mythopoetic contents of this kind (dreams and fantasies) originate autonomously from an objective layer (Jung) later called the collective unconscious” (Dietrich, 2018, pp.

127). The peacock I channeled and the peacock on TV came from the same layer, the collective unconscious. Hera is in my unconscious and in the unconscious of the collective.

Another psychologist, Henry Corbin, posits this shared world to be the mundus imaginalis, an intermediary realm of forms, a psychic reality "between sense perceptions and the intuitions or categories of the intellect,"(Corbin, 1989pp. vii) whose function is to create "symbols on the one hand from the Sensible Forms, on the other from the Intellectual Forms" (Corbin, 1989 pp. ix). Thus the peacock as a symbol could be seen to emerge from this mundus imaginalis. The peacock symbol of male "beauty" in sports or evolutionary fitness, emerged from the sensible forms and the intellectual symbol of Hera from astrology, but it was still from the same realm, the mundus imaginalis.

In seeing the peacock symbol on television I thought about the Goddess watching the game, and then felt aware of myself and collective as observing in "Hera" fashion, looking onto the world of mortals from afar with an eye for jealous competition, wondering who will Zeus choose next? This was a reminder that we are in a time of watching others on social media, Hera continually searching for the Zeus other that is having a better time. For instance, according to a survey conducted by the Kaspersky lab:"57% (of participants) admitted that after going on social media they have felt that someone has a better life than them" (Bock et al, 2017). Just as Zeus has expanded with the web to cover the globe, Hera has expanded

in equal measure in comparative jealousy of other lives in the technological, virtual realm. The posts demonstrate morsels of consciousness which we as observers may unconsciously compare, acting as Hera, feeling insecure of our immediate surroundings. One can even feel like Hera with their own past as in the same survey, “37% of respondents admitted that looking at past happy posts of their own can leave them with the feeling that their own past was better than their present life.”(Bock et al, 2017). Happiness captured externally is compared with what one has in the present which in some ways can put to the test the never-ending expansion of the web. Thus the peacock symbol originating from the collective unconscious, or mundus imaginalis, can be amplified to the collective experience of jealousy from observing on the internet.

Though the personal and collective sense of competition can seem endless, one can transform jealousy for instance into loyalty to one’s team so it inspires self-improvement and participation. Dietrich writes, “it is in the imaginal world that all theophanic visions and alchemical transformations occur”(pp. 149). The peacock itself is symbol of transformation in alchemy that heralds the end of the first *nigredo* phase when “greasy black contents of the alembic suddenly turn iridescent in the flask”(Vollnagel, 2016). Maybe the peacock feathers in the ocean is heralding a change in consciousness at a collective level, where the “greasy black contents” of oil damaging oceanic wildlife will signal a transition to more “clean” energy. Maybe the peacock shift into the world of the

interconnected web is a harbinger for a future ecosystem where currency is exchanged through wavelength and we can clean up the damage we have done to the Earth. Further the jealousy coming from the metaphorical peacock in social media may be a necessary step of overcoming one's ego on a collective scale, channeling the positive side of Hera in her loyalty so we can join in solidarity for the health of the planet.

The final theme I would like to explore from this piece is forgiveness, as the blue rainfall of grief meets red anger bubbles. Forgiveness begins in the awareness of the betrayal, as shown in the red bubbles escaping from the ocean, but then the surrender of self for the other in the rain, in a way as clouds release their water from the air in a sign of forgiveness. This is most evident in the four blue lines meeting with the red bubble in the asymmetric opening (humiliation) on the lower right side of the glyph as a transcendent function, where the consciousness gained from the betrayal comes to terms again with the unconscious. Despite all the suffering at the hand of her husband, Hera time and again forgives Zeus, allowing for the sacred marriage once again. Phenomenologically, before I started integrating the forgiveness piece I felt the exhaustion from the anger and jealousy from the myth, but the power of forgiveness created a certain feeling of release and resolution. Making the unconscious conscious beginning with the awareness born of betrayal involved suffering, but the coming to terms with it from forgiveness made the link to the unconscious all the stronger. The humility in the fact that "forgiveness doesn't come

from the ego” (Hillman, 2005, pp.202) enabled surrender to the whole of the art. This relinquishing of the ego opened up a reconciliation with the unconscious as I realized Hera is Zeus’s match because she has enough sense of self to be able to overcome her ego to forgive him. I could turn an awe inspired face toward my unconscious Hera as a result of her power of forgiveness and tolerance.

Further, I engaged in the active imagination while it was raining by the ocean, a context setting for a forgiving symbol, as in *Memories Dreams Reflections* Jung writes that “the rain showed that the tension between consciousness and the unconscious was being resolved” (Jung, 1963 pp. 181) In the mundus imaginalis I felt the rain and ocean wash away grief, peacock feathers of a resilient Queen. Sedna was there too, as the storm brought about the awareness of betrayal by her father. Though Sedna does not overtly forgive her father, she does provide the Inuit hunters with food, in a way in forgiveness for the fact of inequality in relationships. Further, though she does withhold the harvest from hunters if they are not treating the ocean creatures well, she always forgives if she is appeased by a tribal shaman (Lindeman, 1999). Both these goddesses thus demonstrated the power of forgiveness in the reconciliation of the conscious and the unconscious.

To conclude, in this paper, in accordance with imaginal theory, the theme of betrayal was discerned through the Jungian transcendent function, as an angry Hera is seen through the Hera glyph emerging from the sea of

unconsciousness surrounded by 4 Aries ram glyphs. Symbolic overlap in the Sedna and Hera myth, was revealed through the immaterializing forms and multiformity of image in Hillman's sense of soul. Jealousy was examined through the Jungian collective unconscious and Henry Corbin's mundus imaginalis through the synchronous peacock feather event in the creation of the art. Finally, forgiveness was explored through the rain uniting with the red bubbles in the transcendent function as well as in the mundus imaginalis.

In the process of applying imaginal theory to the artwork that resulted from an archetype in my astrology chart, I hope to have demonstrated that astrologically informed active imagination can help guide the process of bringing unconscious contents into conscious awareness. Tracing back to the roots of active imagination, beginning with Jung's *Red Book,* astrological symbolism is included in the artistic products of Jung's own confrontation with the unconscious, for instance in the astrological symbols in the banner on the top of the page of "folio i"(Jung, 2009, pp. 1) Perhaps astrology informed Jung's process and helped guide him in his own active imaginations. In this experience of engaging the unconscious in active imagination through astrology I have learned to appreciate Hera and Zeus as principles in my life and will strive to continue bringing to consciousness the positive characteristics of a loyal Hera capable of forgiveness and awareness of others. Further, in a future practice as an archetypal astrology coach I hope to serve others through a similar active imagination practice

with their charts so they can not only understand their own charts better, but also see the connections linking them with others in the collective archetypal imagination.

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